

CALL TO ORDER

The one-hundred thirty-ninth meeting of the Water and Wastewater Operator's Advisory Council (Council) was called to order at 1:30 p.m. by Carol Reifschneider, Ph.D., MSU-Northern, Council Chairperson. Other Council members present included: Joanne "Joni" Hall Emrick, Kalispell; Council Vice Chair; Roger Thomas, Billings; Roger Skogen, Valier, Tony Porrazzo, Polson, Steve Ruhd, Conrad, and Jon Dilliard, DEQ Public Water and Subdivision Bureau Chief.

Department personnel attending all or portions of the meeting were Jenny Chambers, Certification Officer; Reta Therriault, License Permit Technician;

Also attending was Steve Anderson, Anderson Precast & Supply, Inc.

MINUTES APPROVED

The minutes from the previously held meeting on May 20, 2004 were unanimously approved following a motion by Joni and a second by Roger Thomas.

ABC WATER EXAM  
PROCESS

Jenny reported the ABC water exams are being used for the first time at on October 1, 2004. Jenny indicated that applicants taking exams for the first time during a one year would use the number one water exams. She will request the number two exams from ABC. When applicants take the number one exam and fail, they will be issued the number two exam when they retake the exam. At the end on one year Jenny will request a list of questions missed for each exam classification from ABC, which will be reviewed, and changes will be made if necessary. Question comment forms, handed out with the exams, will be reviewed and changes to the questions will be made if deemed necessary.

SECURITY QUESTIONS  
PRE-TESTING (ABC)

Jenny provided the Council a copy of an e-mail she received from Suzanne De la Cruz of ABC. The e-mail indicated that ABC has completed grant work from the EPA to develop and validate security questions. As a final step in the grant, ABC is conducting a voluntary pre-testing of the questions. Jenny explained that the pre-test questions would be given from November 2004 through March 2005. ABC will assess how well each question performs and resolve unforeseen problems before using security questions on a scored version of an exam. Tony Porrazzo made the comment that homeland security is getting a little out of control, especially for the small systems. Jon Dilliard wondered if this would generate more work the operator certification program. Reta indicated that it would not. Roger Skogen wanted to know

how we would be sure that the examinees focus on their examinations and not the security questions. Reta suggested that the pre-testing security questions could be handed out at the time the applicants hand in their examinations. Jon was concerned on the validity of the questions if there is no study material on security issues. Jenny will ask ABC if they have any handouts on security that could be mailed out with the study materials. Carol made a motion that we participate with the pre-testing security questions. This was unanimous.

#### REAPPOINTMENT OF COUNCIL MEMBER

At this time, Carol congratulated Joanne “Joni” Hall Emrick on her reappointment to the Advisory Council. The Council was given a copy of a letter from Governor Judy Martz that stated Joni fulfilled the qualifications for being a municipal representative. Joni’s term is effective October 16, 2004, ending October 16, 2010. Congratulations Joni and thank you for all of support you have given the Operator Certification program throughout the years.

#### WATER SCHOOL AND EXAM REPORT

Reta reported to the Council members on the office exams administered since the May Council meeting and the May 2004 Summer School held in Missoula. There were a total of 10 exams given at Summer School and the pass rate was 100%. Reta also reported that 19 office exams were given (Billings, Helena, Kalispell, and one in Havre), and there was a 78.95 pass rate. Reta noted that 72 people took 84 exams following the 70<sup>th</sup> Fall Water School on September 26, 2003. The pass rate for this exam was 72.62%. This year, 81 have signed up to take 95 exams following the water school. Jenny noted that several people that signed up for the exam opted to take the exam at a later date.

Jenny reported that there were approximately 180 participants at and 15 vendors for the 71<sup>st</sup> Annual Water School held in Bozeman this year. Roger Skogen said that this school was one of the best he has ever been to. The only problem he had was that two of the speakers changed their topics at the last minute. He said that while their talk was interesting, the subject matter did not apply to his systems. Jenny said that topics speakers’ give would be clearer in the future. Steve Ruhd said that he would like to see the time slots for water and wastewater more consistent so he could listen to more of the talks. Jenny said that this would be hard to do because of the topics and because of the dual classes.

#### REIMBURSEMENT

Jenny advised the Council that Ruby Miller, Reimbursement Grant

PROGRAM UPDATE

Account Technician, had resigned her position with the Operator Certification Program and that her last day was September 10<sup>th</sup>. Ruby and her husband Doug have moved to Troy where Doug is employed at the Genesis Troy Mine. Jenny reported that the reimbursement program had paid out a total of \$99,285.19 since its implementation. She stated that the total reimbursement requests since October 30, 2002 has been 918. Of those requests the largest payout of \$34,416.72, has been for mileage followed by operator training at \$26,962.00. To date there have been 20 training honorariums paid through the reimbursement program. Jenny said that Operator Certification will continue to promote the reimbursement program with articles in the Big Sky Clearwater, on the web page, and mailing information to the operators with their reimbursement notices. Jenny praised Ruby for the excellent job that she did while working for the program.

RENEWAL UPDATE

Reta Therriault provided the Council with a page of water and wastewater renewal statistics for the past 3 years. She noted that 2003-2004 as of 8/18/03 the total revoke letters mailed and the total certificates revoked, were less than the other 2 years because it was a non-CEC year. The 2004-2005 total renewal money, which includes late fees, reflects the \$10.00 increase in wastewater renewals. Jenny also noted that a portion of the \$10,835.00 increase was due to an increase in operators.

COMPLIANCE STATUS  
REPORT AND  
ENFORCEMENT

Jenny told the Council that Ashley is in the process of going through all of the community and non-transient non-community files, checking to see who is taking the bacteriological or coliform samples. A certified operator or someone who has been approved by the state must take these samples. Reta noted that Ashley has run into quite a few systems that have a certified operator, but someone else other than the certified operator is taking the water samples. Jenny said that systems not in compliance will be put on the compliance list and letters will be mailed out reminding them of the law.

Copies of the August 2004 Compliance Status Report showed a compliance rate of 9.077% for Community, 9336% for Non-Transient Non-Community, and 9766% for Wastewater systems. Reta noted that several of the systems on the compliance list had operators apply for temporary certificates and some systems have operators taking the exam on October 1<sup>st</sup>. She said that this should lower the non-compliance.

Jenny said that Bainville is the last compliance issue.

## COLLECTION SYSTEMS

Jenny reported back to the Council on certifying collection systems. She said that they could be broken down according to population: over 10,000, 15,000 and 20, 000. She didn't have any other information because Montana law does not allow for this. Jenny said she spoke with Bill Bahr, Wastewater Environmental Specialist. Bill is of the opinion that there cannot be a wastewater system with out a collection system. Jon Dilliard asked about making it voluntary for collection systems. Steve R. said that this topic has been discussed for the past 10 years and nothing has been done but maybe it is time. Jon said that our attorneys have concerns about fees. However, we certify the Tribal people, water bottlers and water haulers, and Culligan Water, which is voluntary. Jon said that the deadlines is past, as of May, for this legislative session. Jenny said that she would pursue this issue and see how many people would get certified voluntary. At this point Jon said that the Legislature wants to see focus groups, grassroots groups, etc... and use that to enact change. Roger Thomas asked about funding for these types of exams. Jenny said that right now it would not be a problem to have ABC do collection exams but in the future there would be fee increases. Carol asked for a motion to pursue collection system certification. Steve made the motion and Tony Porrazzo seconded.

## GENERAL ISSUES

Jenny wanted to know if there were any general issues that the Council would like to discuss. She feels that she dominates the Council meetings and would like to see the Council members be more involved. Council members said that when Jenny sends out draft agendas, if there are issues, they would be brought up at that time. Jon said that he spent some time talking with the operators this morning and he thoroughly enjoyed it. He suggested that it would be nice for the Council to get more exposure and interact with the operators. It was also suggested that the Council either open or close the water school, panel style. They could introduce themselves and give a brief bio. Jenny said that an article on the Council members can be put into the Big Sky Clearwater.

## ON SITE WASTEATER TREATMENT PRESENTATION

Steve Anderson of Precast & Supply, Inc., in Bozeman, gave a presentation on recirculation sand filters and [collection systems](#)? Many of the system pictures Steve showed were from systems in Bozeman. He explained that the sand filters could be used for residential, small communities, schools, etc... The effluent can be distributed subsurface in a shallow drainfield or disinfected for reuse or surface discharge. Steve explained that the wastewater

One-hundred thirty-ninth meeting  
Water and Wastewater Advisory Council  
September 30, 2004  
Bozeman, Montana

goes into the recirculation tank for treatment then into the sand filter in time-controlled doses and then drains back to the recirculation tank. After several passed through the sand filter and recirculation tank, the treated wastewater is ready for discharge. Steve said that the recirculating sand filters are built so that monitoring and controlling are done remotely via pager or modem. Recording and storing data is time and date stamped. Special software is not needed and data can exported into commonly used programs. [Did you or Steve say that Montana did not require certified operator for sand filters, but it is recommended?](#) After the presentation, Steve asked for questions. There were no questions and the Council thanked Steve for his time.

DATE OF NEXT  
MEETING

The next meeting will be May 19, 2005 in Helena.

ADJOURNMENT

[Carol](#) made the motion to adjourn the meeting at [2:30](#) and [Joni](#) seconded. The motion to adjourn was unanimous.